InfoWorks! 2010

The Rhode Island Department of Education
Interactive Education Data Initiative
A User's Guide

infoworks.ride.ri.gov

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

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Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner

InfoWorks is a collaborative effort between the Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (RIDE) and The Providence Plan. Contributors include:

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The Providence Plan: Patrick J. McGuigan, Katie Murray, Rebecca Lee, Jessica Cigna, and Peter Landry
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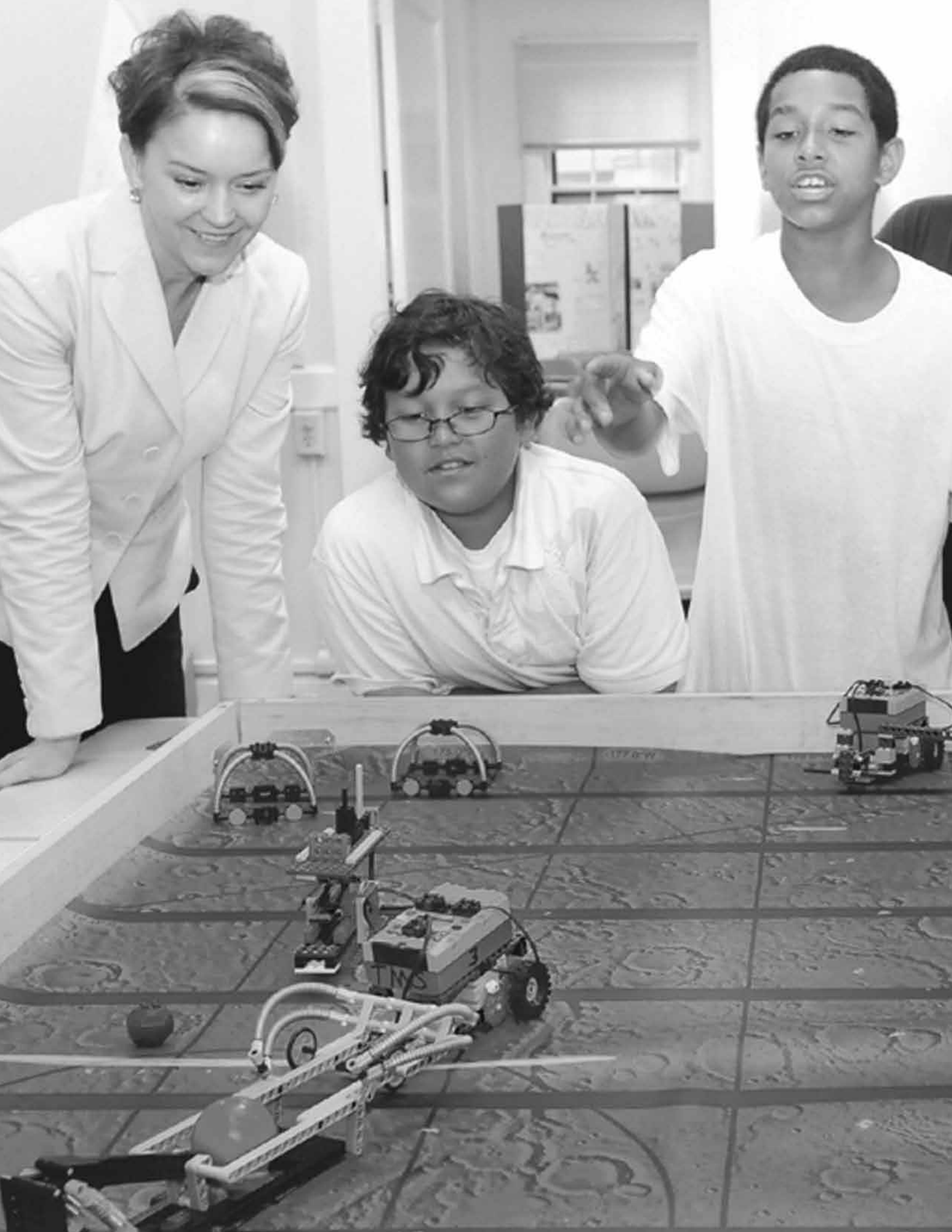


You will find easy access to information about schools, districts, and the state as a whole.

Dear Fellow Rhode Islanders,

As we work together to transform education in Rhode Island, one of our top priorities is to develop user-friendly data systems. We want everyone in the state – educators, parents, students, and community members – to have ready access to clear, accurate, and timely information about our schools.

As many people have pointed out, we have lots of education data and information in Rhode Island, but we have not always put that information to its best use. Teachers and school leaders need good, accurate data to drive performance and to help students achieve in school. Parents need clear and comprehensible reports to understand how their children are performing. All taxpayers and policymakers need solid data to drive systems reform and to hold us accountable for our work.

InfoWorks, our new state data website, represents our most ambitious effort to make our wealth of education data readily available to the public. Here you will find easy access to information about schools, districts, and the state as a whole. For its inaugural launch, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) is making the state's large amount of testing and demographic data available in interactive charts and graphs. As the site continues to grow – through the fall and into future years – we will add data and reports on school finances, discipline and safety, teacher quality, and other information about the learning conditions in our schools and in our state.

I hope you will find the information that you need in InfoWorks. We welcome your feedback, as we are always striving to improve our data systems and our public reporting. Thank you for your interest in public education in Rhode Island, where our goal is to prepare all students for success in college, careers, and life.

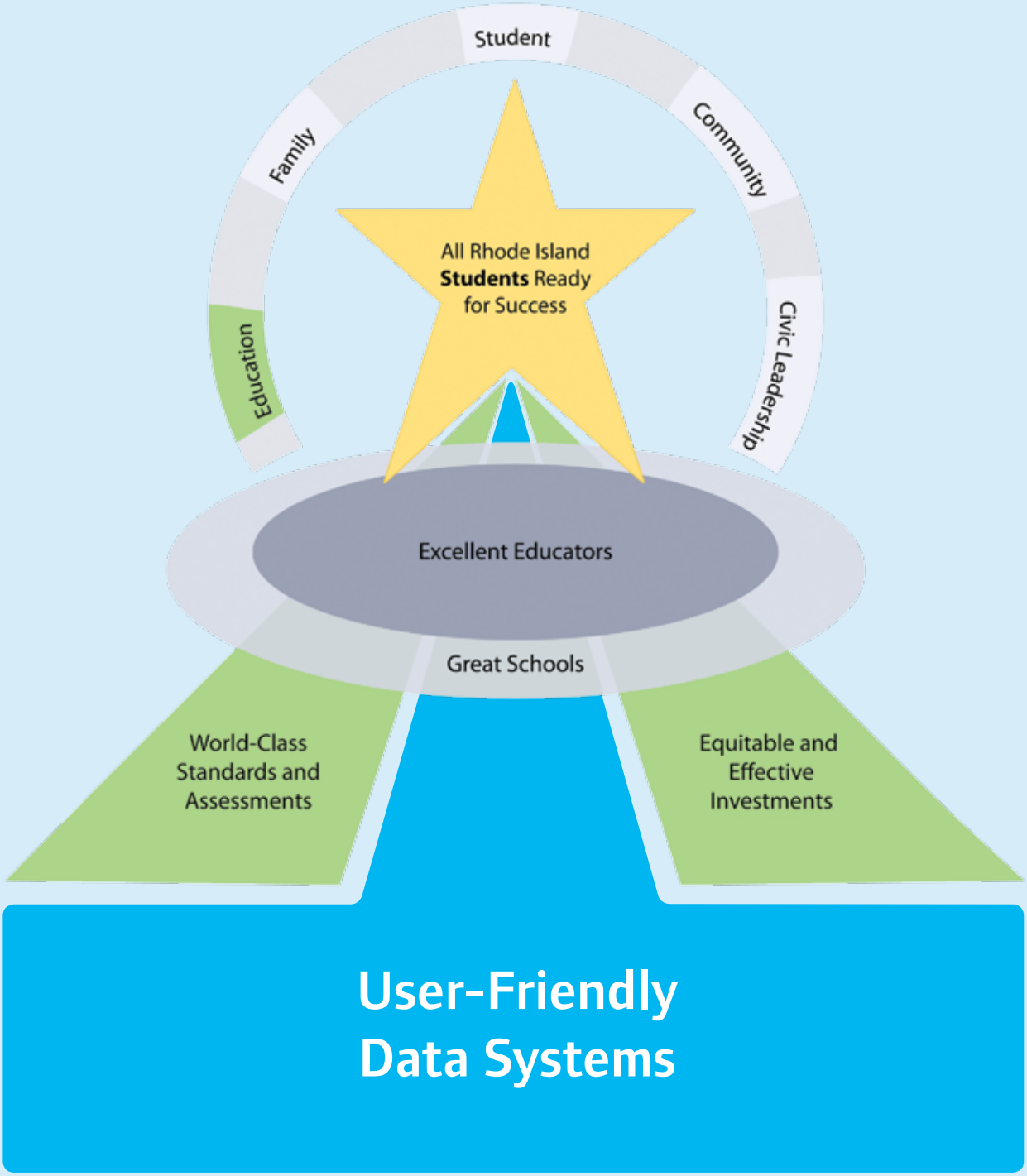
Sincerely,

Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner

Visit the InfoWorks website at: infoworks.ride.ri.gov

Photo: Newport Daily News

Transforming Education in Rhode Island: The Rhode Island Strategic Plan



See the full strategic plan at: ride.ri.gov/commissioner

Develop User-Friendly Data Systems

Whether we're improving student achievement, bettering the school climate, or wrestling with a budget, the first question is: "What do the data say?" With rich data at our fingertips, all Rhode Islanders can understand how our schools and children perform. Data show us where we need to fix problems quickly and what we can learn from examples of success.

Everyone Must Have Access to Usable Data.

Teachers must have quick feedback from assessments of all kinds to inform their instruction and to identify students' learning needs.

Parents must have accurate evidence of their child's progress and the school's safe, nourishing, and creative environment.

The public must know that schools are cost-effective, preparing a well-skilled future workforce, serving families, and attending to each student's needs.

Students must have feedback about their academic progress, in the electronic formats so familiar to their generation.

Data Must Be Relevant, Timely, and Practical.

The charts in the new InfoWorks website are dynamic and interactive. The charts "populate" – or automatically fill out – with the most up-to-date data available. Except for links to static reports and pages on other external websites, almost all of the vast quantity of live data is available for user interactions.

In time, users will be able to sort, manipulate, and compare data. Users will generate their own charts to use in grants, evaluations, studies, classroom lessons, policy presentations, and much more.

Data Systems Must Drive Continuous Improvement.

What data will help us determine in which areas our students need additional support? And, after finding problems and providing support, what data indicators will assure us that our efforts worked?

The answers to the questions above are complex, but data can guide us to solutions. Statistical information is by no means the only source of answers. Data show us when we need to shut off the computer and go out to gather other sorts of observable information.

Welcome to the InfoWorks website.

The design of the new InfoWorks makes RIDE's wealth of data easy to find, understand, and analyze. The user-friendly presentation works to engage, inform, and empower everyone interested in using data to improve educational results for Rhode Island's students.

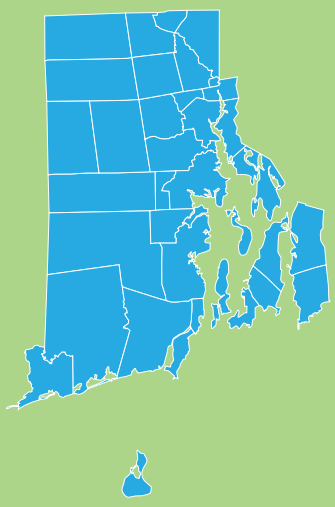
The Home Page

We encourage first-time users to visit "FIRST TIME HERE?" for a quick tutorial about the site's features.

Click on any topic around the wheel to get to an overview of the available data by topic.

Users can also download a pdf copy of this report to have on hand for tips on how to use the site and what's in it.

School Finder



Hover your mouse over the map to find a district. Click it, and you will go to the district's home page.

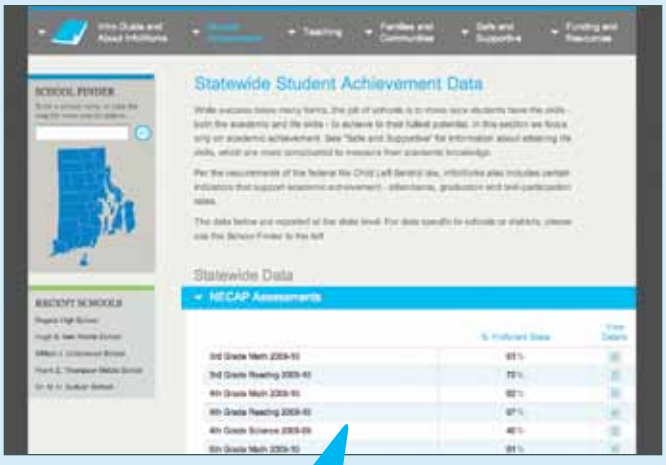
You can also enter the name of your school in the dialogue box and find it that way.

Under "Recently Viewed," you'll find a list of what you've been looking at, so you have a quick overview of your own research or a quick way to get back to the previous page.

The new InfoWorks "populates" interactive charts with the data you request. Short explanations of what you're looking at and simple definitions of terms accompany the data.

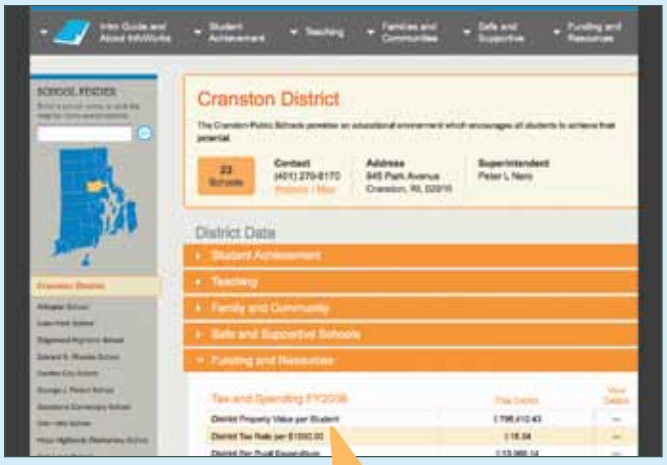
How do I find the data I'm looking for?

This site has test scores, demographics, teacher quality information, and soon will have survey and financial data, and more! It's a lot. So we recommend that you start by choosing a level – statewide comparisons, one district, or an individual school – and investigate what's available.



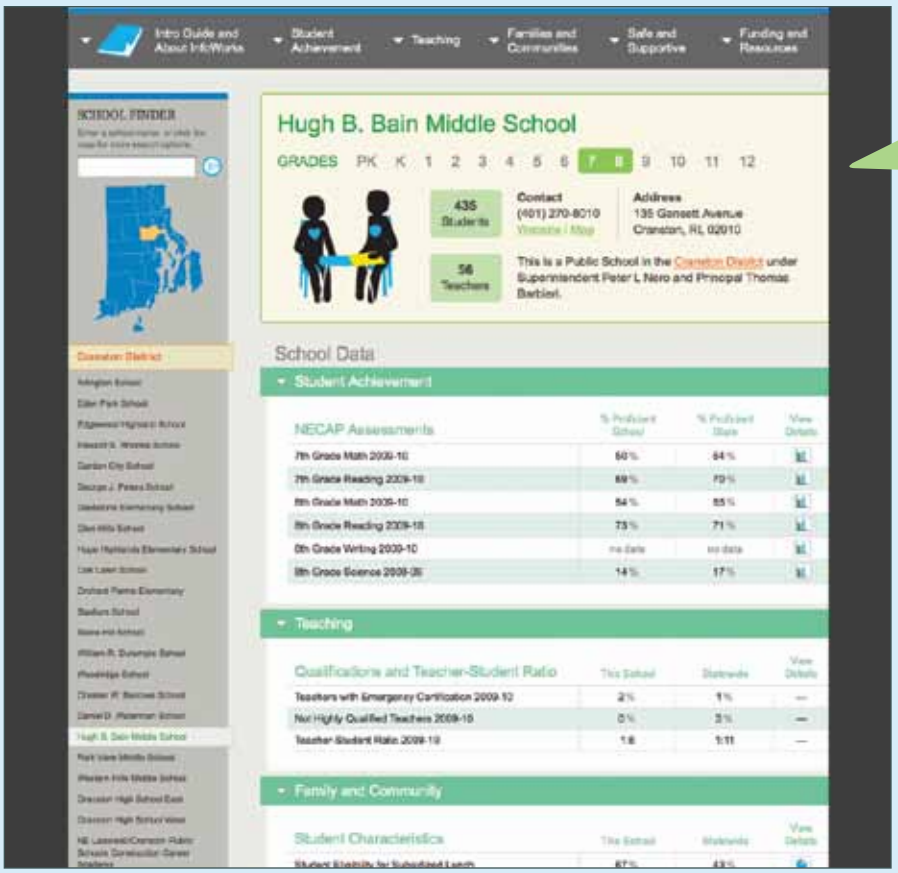
State Pages

State information is always in blue. State charts generally compare schools or grade levels by topic – such as 7th-grade math or student demographics.



District Pages

District information is always in orange. The interactive map called "School Finder" allows users to find school-district pages. It is located on the left-hand-side menu when looking at a school page.



School Pages

Individual school information is always in green. The box at the top has the basic information on each school, including contact information and its website, if it has one. Typically, school data are reported in comparison with statewide summary data to put the information in the context of the state as a whole.

On any of these pages, click the solid-colored bar labeled with the topic of your choice to see what data are available.


BRING ON THE
OMPETITION
ARTHUR'S
NEW PUPPY

Rhode Island's Basic Education Program together with RIDE's strategic plan provide the framework for the InfoWorks website.

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Effective July 1, 2010, the new Basic Education Program (BEP) outlines the Regents expectations for school and district quality. InfoWorks uses the categories in the BEP to organize its data, as displayed on the wheel below.

Learn more about the BEP at: ride.ri.gov/regents/regentsregulations.aspx

What's in InfoWorks LIVE?

In order for all Rhode Island students to be successful, schools and districts must examine everything they do to ensure that students are supported to the greatest extent possible. The data elements listed below are included on the InfoWorks website. They are **what matters** to improving outcomes for all Rhode Island students.

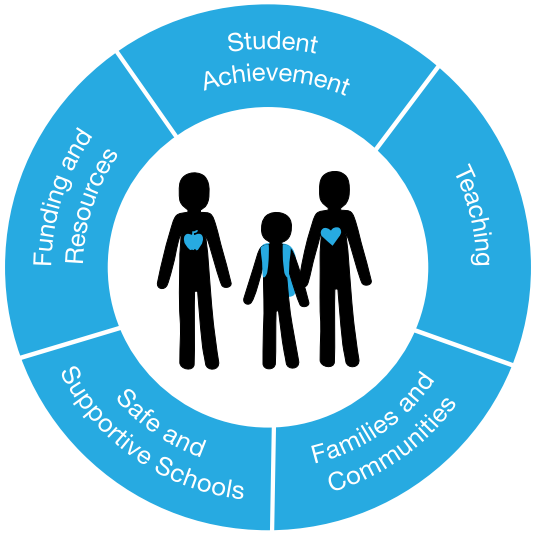
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
- NECAP Assessments, SAT, AP

TEACHING
- Teacher Qualifications and Teacher-Student Ratio

FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES
- Subsidized Lunch, English as a Second Language, Special Education

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOLS
- Attendance, Graduation Rates, Suspensions

FUNDING AND RESOURCES
- Municipal Property Value per Student, Tax Rates, Tax Capacity and Effort



LIVE! ON THE WEB

What Matters?

InfoWorks explains what matters in-depth. Click on the navigation bar on the website.

Photo: The Learning Community

The story of Rhode Island standards and assessments.

InfoWorks LIVE!

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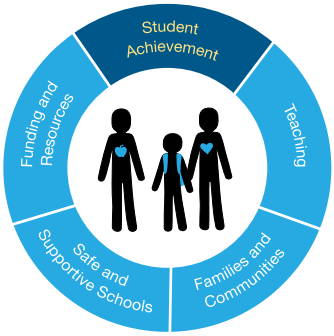


WHAT MATTERS ABOUT THE NECAP? (THE NEW ENGLAND COMMON ASSESSMENT PROGRAM)

In 2003, three New England states – New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island – pooled their resources to create one multi-state assessment program. The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires that all states develop programs to test students in grades 3-8 and one grade in high school. The three New England states forged a partnership to develop common standards and assessments called the New England Common Assessment Program, or NECAP. It was—and still is—the only multi-state testing partnership that is already built and functioning.

Testing experts and teachers began their work by creating a set of curriculum expectations and standards for each subject area – reading, writing, math, and science. These expectations describe, grade-by-grade, what skills and content a child needs to learn, so each successive year in school builds new knowledge on a solid academic foundation. Many teachers from each state worked as partners with testing and subject matter experts. They collected and studied research and national standards created by respected groups like the National Council of Teachers of English and the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. They also examined the most well-regarded national and international tests to make sure the NECAP expectations would prepare students to be successful across a spectrum of tests.

Once the expectations for each subject area were established, experts created the NECAP assessments to determine whether students learned the agreed-upon concepts, content, and skills.

The NECAP developers took extensive steps to get a sense of the level of difficulties and demands before setting standards of proficiency. The three states needed to agree on what level of learning was good enough, or "proficient." Early versions of the assessment, administered to groups of students, determined the level of difficulty of each question on each assessment. With all the results in hand, developers worked with psychometricians, specialists who understand

how to measure student learning, which is essentially what an academic test does. Together, these specialists, classroom teachers, and education officials decided, test by test, what scoring levels indicated whether students had attained proficiency. The NECAP states set their standards high.

The NECAP assessments monitor and report to the public on the academic health of each school. ESEA requires states to classify the performance level of their schools. It, in effect, grades or "classifies" every school on the basis of its assessment – and takes into account graduation, attendance, and test-participation rates. Other indicators may be included in the future. Classifications reveal which schools are achieving especially good results, so others can study their work and learn from them.

To help each individual student, the NECAP developers created reports that give teachers details about each child's areas of strength and weakness. This rich information allows teachers to adjust instruction to get better results and to identify children who have not yet mastered certain skills and need targeted help. Administrators and School Improvement Teams use this information to design improvements in instruction, curriculum, and evaluation at the school and district levels.

Parents, too, can see details about their child's performance in the reports that go home. This empowers parents not only to help their children, but also to work with the school on providing programs and interventions that respond to areas where the student may need additional support.

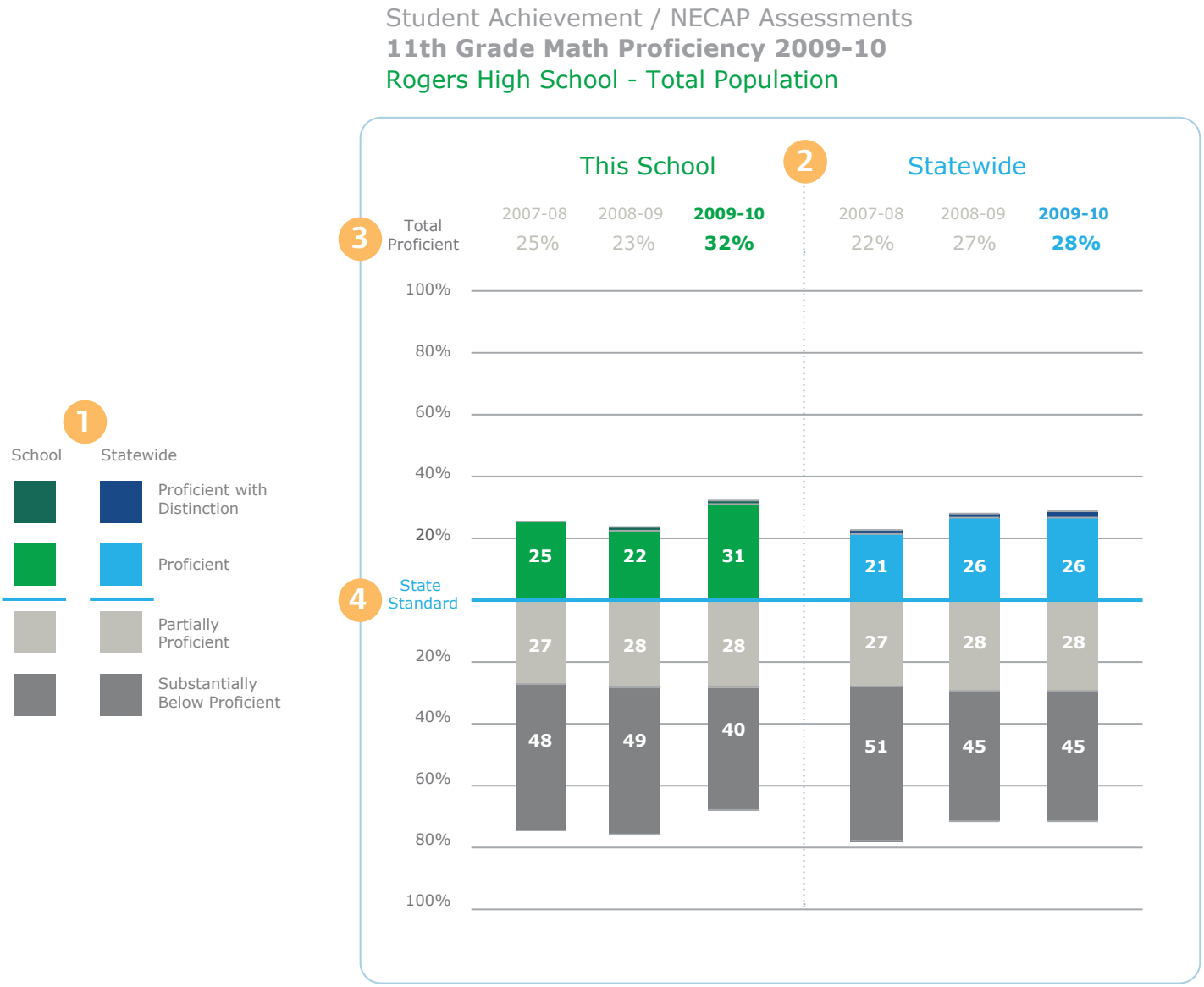
LIVE! ON THE WEB

Explanations and Definitions

Explanations — often under the title What Matters? — provide contextual information about selected subjects.

Definitions pop up when you hover your mouse over the term on the charts themselves, and they are collected in a searchable Glossary.

How to read InfoWorks charts



1 **Proficient with Distinction:** Students demonstrate the knowledge and skills needed to participate and excel in instructional activities at the current grade level.

Proficient: Students demonstrate only minor gaps in the knowledge and skills needed to participate and excel in instructional activities at the current grade level, and it is likely that these gaps can be addressed during the course of typical classroom instruction.

Partially Proficient: Students demonstrate gaps in the knowledge and skills needed to participate and excel in instructional activities at the current grade level. Additional instructional support may be necessary for these students to meet grade-level expectations.

Substantially Below Proficient: Students demonstrate extensive and significant gaps in the knowledge and skills needed to participate and excel in instructional activities at the current grade level. Additional instructional support is necessary for these students to meet grade-level expectations.

(For explanation of 2, 3, and 4 please see next page.)

How to read and interpret the charts on the InfoWorks website.

Start by focusing on the "State Standard," the blue line dividing the percent proficient from the percent below proficient. Ideally, all students are proficient or proficient with distinction in every subject. Looking across the years, you want to see that your school and the state are climbing above the blue line.

Note that last year the school in this chart, Rogers High School in Newport, reduced the percentage of students who were "Substantially Below Proficient" by nearly 10 points. The data argue that this school's math initiatives are starting to pay off both in increasing proficiency, and in helping students to overcome challenges.

DISAGGREGATED DATA

By federal law, all states must disaggregate, or sort out, their data to show how students with certain characteristics perform.

The purpose is to make sure that no demographic group is being under-served.

InfoWorks LIVE!

Find information about specific schools and districts at: infoworks.ride.ri.gov

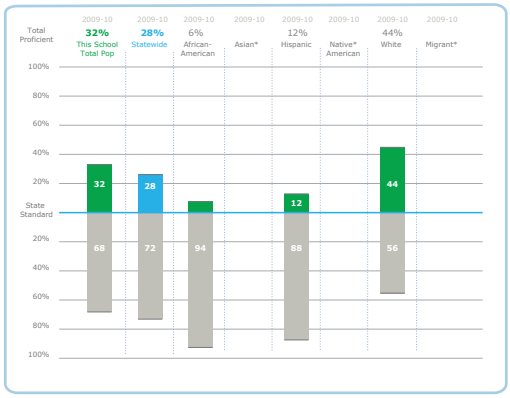
2 **Comparing School and State:** Throughout the website, you'll find that the school level is color-coded with green and the state with blue. This chart visually compares one school's achievement with the state's.

3 **Total Proficient:** The numbers across the top add the "Proficient" to the "Proficient with Distinction" to show the total proficiency each year.

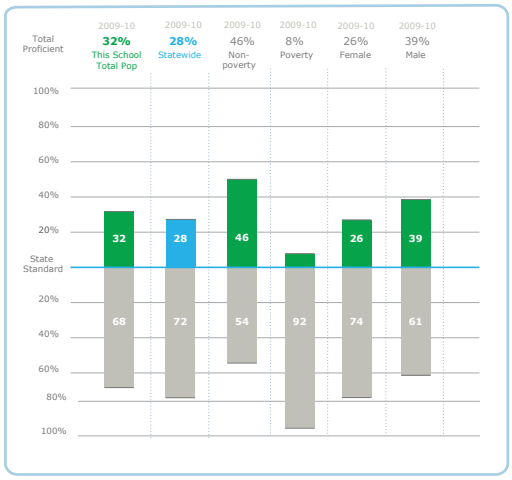
4 **State Standard:** The state standard does not change. Students are measured against that statewide standard. (See the NECAP explainer, pages 8-9.)

Disaggregated by:

Ethnicity and Migrant Status



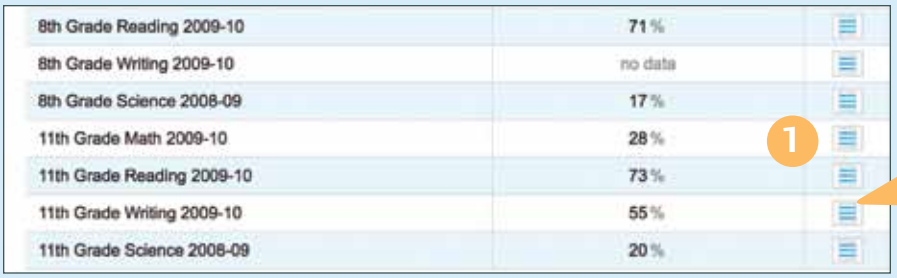
Poverty and Gender



Disabilities and ELL

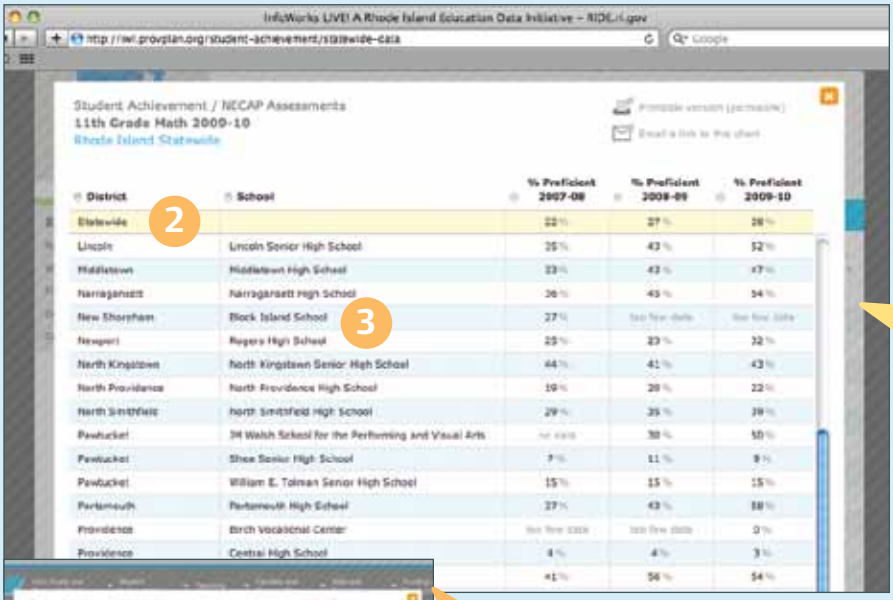
* indicates too few or no test-takers to report

LIVE! ON THE WEB



1: State-Level Charts

Most statewide information separates the schools by level – elementary, middle (grades 6-8), and high. On the proficiency charts, only one content area and one grade level are shown, such as high school math, grade 11. The state-level data are usually displayed with several years of data so you can see improvements, or slippage, over time.



2: Comparing School and State

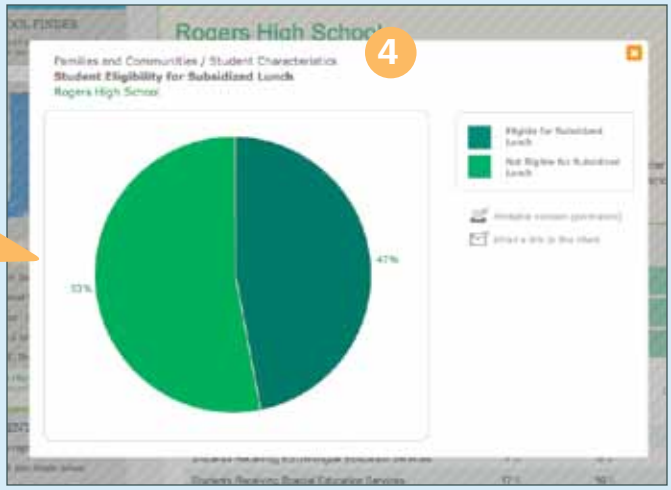
When you scroll through the different schools, the state averages, highlighted in yellow, stay constant.

3: Comparing Schools

The data on the row of proficiency scores in the table is the same as the school-level data you saw on the previous page. This helps you to see your school's data in the context of all other schools at that level, not just the state average, which is in blue on the school's chart.

4: Contextual Data

While investigating a school's performance data, check out related data about the school. Students' challenges, the school's financial support, and survey data all help to create a complete picture of each school.



Our goal is for every child to reach proficiency.

InfoWorks LIVE!

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Children come to school with very different backgrounds, abilities, desires, and experiences. In order to shine light on the academic progress of all students and to ensure that achievement gaps are narrowing, the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) requires states and schools to collect and publish information for certain student groups. The groups are those students whose characteristics include:

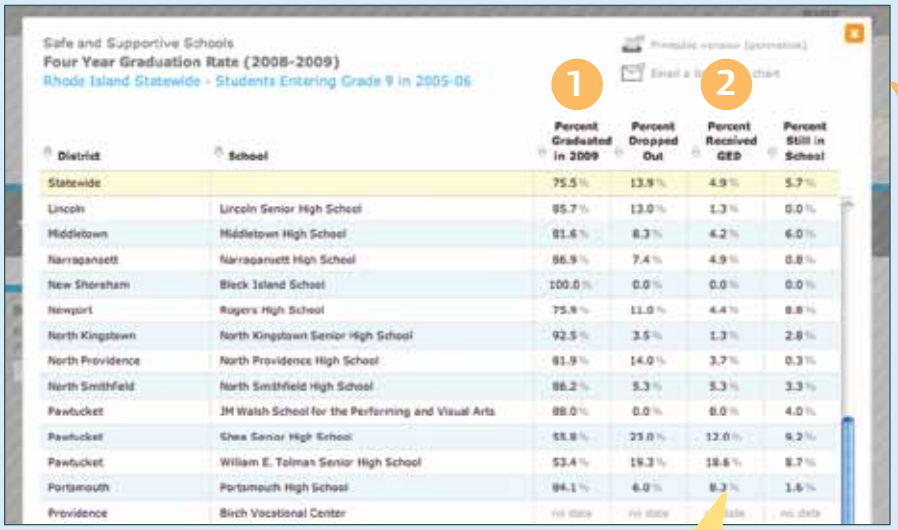
- Eligible for subsidized lunch (a poverty indicator)
- Race and ethnicity
- English language learners
- Students with disabilities

Also, schoolwide participation rates in each test are examined, as is the schoolwide attendance rate at the elementary and middle levels, and the four-year graduation rate at the high schools.

To respond to ESEA's requirements, Rhode Island has built robust data systems that give RIDE detailed information to help plan and target resources so schools and districts can meet the needs of all their students.

Our goal is for every child to reach proficiency. The data point us to those schools that are having more success at helping students achieve academically, so that other schools across the state can learn from their success.

LIVE! ON THE WEB



1: Sorting by the 4-year graduation rate

In InfoWorks, all columns are sortable. The ability to sort columns high to low, on the 4-year graduation rate, on any of the data points helps us find examples of schools getting desirable outcomes. Finding successful schools allows us to see which are using techniques that could be studied and replicated.

2: The GED

Instead of earning a regular high-school diploma, some students may take a battery of five tests covering mathematics, science, reading, writing, and social studies. These five tests also measure skills in communication, information processing, problem solving, and critical thinking.

Everyone must have access to usable data.

When we know what data are available and how to use data, we can build meaningful knowledge. That knowledge will help us improve our schools, support students, and manage our budgets. Over the next couple of years, the quantity of InfoWorks data will grow considerably, providing users with expanding contexts for information that already interests them. Increasingly, users will synthesize information to make compelling arguments for change – or reassurance that what we're doing is working – backed up with reliable, accurate data.

InfoWorks LIVE!

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The Rhode Island Department of Education is expanding its efforts to collect and report data that are useful to educators, parents, and the public. Coming soon will be information from three of RIDE's new initiatives:

- **The Uniform Chart of Accounts (UCOA)** – A method of posting and recording expenses and income that is uniform across all districts and charter schools, allowing officials and the public to make school-to-school and district-to-district comparisons of educational expenditures and investments.
- **SurveyWorks** – is RIDE's revised annual student, teacher, administrator and parent opinions-and-perceptions survey. The survey asks questions about school climate, student academic, social and risk behaviors, parent involvement and needs, and teacher efficacy and expectations. Schools use these data to reveal areas of strength and to identify areas where students, teachers and parents may need additional support.
- **DataHUB** – A powerful program that automatically charts and graphs data in a variety of ways. It visualizes statistics, allowing the user to see relationships among different indicators across state agencies.

GET CONNECTED; STAY CONNECTED.

We invite you to go to the new InfoWorks site and sign up for email updates about school-related data in Rhode Island. The sign-up form is also a great way to give the InfoWorks project team feedback on the website and to submit comments. As new data sets are added to the site and information is corrected, we'll let you know. Eventually, the site will store your frequently visited pages – your child's school's home page, for example – so they'll pop right up without your needing to search.

The new InfoWorks website is entirely interactive. Welcome.

Photo: Riverzedge Arts Project

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